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SUBJECT: YEREVAN DEMARCHE RESPONSE: U.S POSTURE ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM AND NEXT STEPS

REF: SECSTATE 120288

Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) On 25 November 2009, Ambassador Yovanovich delivered reftel demarche to Vigen Sargsian, Deputy Chief of staff to President Serzh Sargsian. Sargsian asked Ambassador how the US Government envisioned the next steps vis-a-vis Iran. Ambassador responded that the next steps are difficult to predict, but that it was clearly time for Iran to take action.

¶2. (C) On 27 November 2009, PolOff also delivered reftel demarche to Garnik Badalyan, head of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Middle Eastern Department. Badalyan noted that while Armenia recognized the need for international pressure on Iran, the Armenian government was severely constrained from taking any proactive measures against the Iranian government. Specifically, Badalyan noted that Armenia's economic, social, and cultural relationship with Iran was simply too important for the geographically isolated Armenia to risk damaging. Still, Badalyan noted that Armenia was part of the international community and wanted to remain engaged on the Iranian nuclear issue.

¶3. During the discussion, Badalyan provided his personal analysis of the current Iranian regime: Iran is experiencing a civil stagnation similar to that which was experienced in the USSR during the Brezhnev period - those who speak out against the regime are severely punished. Still, Badalyan claimed most social issues were adequately addressed by the regime, "families are doing well and people are not hungry." Badalyan added, however, that should the regime collapse, the resulting bloodshed will be far greater than any of us can imagine. "Regime change in Iran always results in bloodshed."

¶4. Bio note: Badalyan, a fluent Farsi speaker, is considered the MFA resident expert on Iran, having served multiple MFA tours in Teheran, a stint in the Soviet military as a Dari/Farsi translator during the Soviet/Afghan war, and written numerous books on the history of Iran (two of which were gifted to Poloff.)
YOVANOVITCH